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AUTHOR LaRocque, Linda; Shields, Carolyn
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ABSTRACT

In July 1994, the British Columbia Ministry of Education invited proposals from school districts interested in studying the feasibility of year-round schools (YRS). This paper presents findings of a study of six partner school districts, each of which implemented its project independently of others while engaging in cross-district collaboration. Conducted during autumn 1995, the study examined the districts' consultation processes during Phase 1 of the YRS Project. Data were obtained from telephone interviews with one contact person from each district, examination of district reports and documents, and observation of partner meetings. The process by which districts became involved in the project; established committees; and acquired, assessed, and shared information is described. The following recommendations are offered: (1) The call for proposals should set clear criteria for school-district selection consistent with the project's intent; (2) the Ministry of Education should make a variety of resources available prior to committees starting the information-gathering process; (3) the ministry should provide districts with guidelines to help them interpret the research literature; (4) the participants should respect and balance opposing viewpoints about YRS; (5) that the membership of both cross-district and district committees be carefully considered to reflect all groups equally; and (6) the ministry should play a more extensive leadership role. Appendices contain a list of the interview questions and profiles of partner districts. (LMI)

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# DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS Of SCHOOL DISTRICT CONSULTATION PROCESSES DURING PHASE 1 OF THE BRITISH COLUMBIA YEAR-ROUND SCHOOL STUDY PROJECT:

A study conducted for the British Columbia Ministry of Education

by

**Linda LaRocque,**
Associate Professor, Faculty of Education,
Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, BC, Canada
Phone (604) 291-3167
Email. Linda_LaRocque@sfu.ca
and

**Carolyn Shields,**
Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Studies,
University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC, Canada
Phone (604) 594-6769
Email. Carolyn.shields@ubc.ca

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## INTRODUCTION

In July 1994 the British Columbia Ministry of Education invited proposals from school districts interested in studying the feasibility of year-round schools (YRS). The terms of this call were to examine: (a) benefits and limitations of multi-track scheduling; (b) ways to make more effective use of school facilities, particularly over the summer months; (c) ways to reduce overcrowding in schools in rapid growth school districts; and (d) educational benefits of shorter, more frequent breaks from school.

Initially seven districts were selected to participate in the YRS Study Project. One withdrew early on, leaving six "partner" districts, as the participants were called. (It is these six which are the focus of this report.) Each partner carried out its own study independently of the others. Through regular partner meetings, however, the participants had opportunities to share information and discuss issues. The "Technical Committee", which was established in response to the partner districts' request to develop a costing framework, was another opportunity for cross-district collaboration.

In March 1995 we were asked, as part of our contract with the Ministry, to examine the consultation processes of the partner districts during Phase 1 of the YRS Study Project. This we did in the Fall of 1995, through a telephone interview with a contact person in each of the six partner districts and an examination of district reports and related documents pertaining to YRS, supplemented by our notes made at the partner meetings we attended. Our interview questions focused on the activities of the partner districts, with particular emphasis on the committee established in each district to study YRS; that is, we adopted a broad definition of the consultation process.

This report is organized according to the major topics discussed during the interview (see Appendix A for the interview schedule; the responses to questions 3 and 6 are combined in the report). The findings across the six partner districts are presented generally, emphasizing similarities and dissimilarities, and without identifying specific districts. A set of recommendations follows. Brief profiles of the activities of each of the partner districts with respect to the study of YRS can found in Appendix B.

## 1. BECOMING INVOLVED IN THE YRS STUDY PROJECT

Before the inception of the Ministry Project, all six school districts had an interest in examining the concept of YRS, albeit to different extents, both as an efficiency measure to cope with increasing student populations and consequent school overcrowding, and as a means of enhancing student learning. Participation in the Ministry Project was seen as a way of complementing and supporting district studies of the possibilities of YRS, through the provision of financial and other resources.

Four of the partner districts had done considerable work on YRS before Ministry funding became available. These activities included the establishment of a committee to study YRS; attendance at one or more conferences sponsored by NAYRE (National Association on Year-Round Education); presentations to/discussions with the Board of School Trustees, schools, stakeholder groups, and community groups such as Parks and Recreation; collection of materials on YRS; and even consideration of the feasibility of implementing pilot year-round schools.

The other two partner districts were only beginning to consider the idea of YRS when the Ministry call for proposals was announced. Mechanisms for studying YRS--for example, the delineation of the terms of reference for the study of the concept of YRS--were just being established.

The six partner districts responded to the Ministry call for proposals and were selected for the pilot study. Their initial understanding of the program was that the Ministry would provide funds to enable them to conduct or continue their study of YRS. There were, however, some concerns. For example, several of the districts had thought they would be given financial and other kinds of support to actually pilot YRS if they came to that decision, support which they did not find forthcoming. Another district felt that the Ministry's focus was overly weighted in favor of the fiscal aspects of YRS, and insufficiently weighted in favor of the educational implications.

The funding that became available through participation in the YRS Study Project did enable the partner districts to conduct their study of YRS as they saw fit--for example, to collect literature on YRS, to attend conferences, to hire consultants, to prepare information packages, to administer surveys, and to provide release time for committee meetings.

Participation proved to have other benefits. The partner districts appreciated that information they required was provided, and that the technical committee was established in response to their request. They found the partner meetings helpful in facilitating exchange of information and the email networking a good means of continuing the exchange.

## 2. ESTABLISHING A COMMITTEE AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

All six districts established a broad-based committee, generally consisting of about 20 members, to study YRS. While the number of groups represented and the number of representatives per group varied from district to district, generally there were representatives from all the major stakeholder groups--teachers, non-certificated staff, school and district administrators, parents, students, trustees. One district even included representation from Parks and Recreation.

A major difference was the use of consultants, formal or informal, on district committees. For example, one district hired two outside consultants to work with and for the committee. Other districts included a representative from British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF) as a regular participant at meetings, in response to his offer of assistance. On occasion, some committees invited speakers to their meetings--mainly representatives from BCTF and CUPE.

In districts where little preliminary work on YRS had been done before the Ministry Project, members of the committee had no difficulty agreeing on the purpose of the committee--namely, to study the feasibility of YRS in their district. In at least one of the other districts, however, a shared understanding of whether the purpose of the committee was to facilitate the efforts of the schools which wished to pilot a YRS calendar or to examine the feasibility of YRS and make recommendations about whether or not to proceed had to be developed. In another district, the need to respond to an organized opposition group redirected much of the attention and energy of the committee.

All the committees tried to work openly and objectively, reserving judgment on YRS until all the information had been collected and analyzed. They attempted to provide checks and balances for one another, by, for example, shifting from positives to negatives and vice versa, focusing on issues, and considering issues from the perspectives of different stakeholder groups. Most broke into subcommittees, each with a specific task, at least some of the time. There were many comments about how well the committees worked together, how

much they learned, and the like. In at least one district, however, there was some disappointment that the committee seemed to be forced into confrontational and adversarial positions by vocal community groups who were adamantly opposed to YRS.

All the committees met frequently--on as many as a dozen occasions--during Phase 1 of the pilot study, generally for several hours, up to a full day, at a time. They collected and analyzed a considerable amount of information (as discussed in section 3) and met with those whom they were representing in different ways and to different extents (as discussed in section 4). The meetings were working sessions, with individual members often taking on specific responsibilities, but with everyone actively involved and contributing.

The Ministry funding was sufficient (and in some cases more than adequate) to support the activities of the committees. The funds were used mainly for release time, to purchase materials (e.g., several of the districts bought the BCTF package), for duplicating, to send people to pertinent conferences and/or visits to sites where YRS was operating, to bring in speakers, to conduct surveys, and to prepare information packages, which, in one district, included a video. One district hired two consultants to work with the committee; another hired a university student to help prepare information materials.

## 3. ACQUIRING AND ASSESSING INFORMATION

Much of the information to inform the decision about year-round schooling was acquired by members of the committee, sometimes working in subcommittees with specific tasks. For several of the districts the BCTF package was a major resource, and its representative was specifically mentioned as offering valuable assistance. In five of the partner districts at least some of the committee members visited both multi-track and single-track year-round schools and attended conferences on YRS (including the BC Forum), where they were able to speak to people directly experienced with YRS and to collect print materials. Such activities were considered to be key resources for the deliberations of the committees. Invited speakers and other resource people constituted other sources of information. In response to the question "What have you read?", many of the replies were a variation of "Whatever we could get our hands on."

Many of the districts found the available literature poorly done and biased; other districts struggled with how to interpret it. But all the committees reached a point where they thought they had sufficient information to decide whether or not to continue with phase 2 of the pilot study. For example, two districts posed a series of

hypotheses and addressed each one, using the information they had collected. Their answers then formed the basis for their recommendations and for the interim reports prepared for the Board of School Trustees. Another committee focused much of the debate on the multi-track/single-track issue and resolved it by developing and critiquing various models of multi-tracking applied to their specific circumstances. This led to the realization that they did not have the population to support multi-track YRS. The committee, however, did see educational benefits to YRS and developed a variation of a single-track model for the district.

There was also considerable interest in Terry Fox Junior High School in Calgary, particularly because it is Canada's first example of a year-round, multi-track school.

## 4. SHARING INFORMATION

All partner-district committees expected that their members would keep their representative group informed, often by means of a report to a regular meeting of that group. Some committees invited officials of either the provincial or local stakeholder groups (e.g., BCTF, CUPE) to make a presentation to the committee as one approach to consulting. Most committees regularly apprised the Board of their deliberations, and ensured that the staff, parents and students at the various schools received progress reports and had opportunities to offer feedback and guidance. Employees, students and parents, and other members of the community were kept informed throughout Phase 1 by means of district and/or school newsletters, press releases, articles in local newspapers and radio interviews.

In most of the partner districts, public meetings were held or were intended to be held at the end of Phase 1. These meetings were widely advertised through school newsletters, local newspapers and radio. Although in several of the partner districts initial interest in YRS had been high, at least at some school sites, by the end of Phase 1 it was difficult to hear these voices in the face of organized opposition to YRS, concerns about amalgamation, and interest in exploring other efficiency measures.

## 5. CURRENT STATUS OF THE YRS STUDY

Some of the partner districts had hoped actually to pilot one or more year-round school projects, while the other partner districts had intended to examine the fiscal and educational possibilities of YRS and come to a decision about the appropriateness of YRS for their particular context.

By the end of Phase 1, four of the committees were still interested in YRS, although not necessarily optimistic about its future:

• One partner district was still actively pursuing the implementation of a single-track year-round school, with the intent to move to multi-track if and when the numbers warranted it, although it was uncertain about Ministry support, especially in terms of implementation costs.

• One partner district had developed a single-track model of YRS for the district and had planned an information campaign; in fact, the brochures and other materials had been prepared and were ready for distribution. Everything was put on hold because of school district amalgamation.

• One partner district had developed an information kit and procedures to be followed if a school wanted to implement a pilot year-round school. The kit is still available upon request to any group in the school. The absence of any pilot schools to date was attributed mainly to an organized opposition group.

• One partner district is extending the study for a year. It has established communication with a district in the USA which has a long history of both single-track and multi-track year-round schools. Because of the similarities between the two districts, the partner district hopes to learn about the real possibilities of YRS from its American counterpart over the course of the next year, thereby addressing the questions and concerns raised during Phase 1.

The other two commitees will likely recommend against further study of YRS (although both intend to visit Terry Fox School in Calgary) and support consideration of other efficiency measures instead.

## 6. REFLECTING ON THE YRS STUDY TO DATE

When asked, "If you could roll back the clock, what would you do differently?" the respondents agreed that they wished the term "pilot" had not been used in Ministry announcements about the YRS Study Project. Apparently many parents and staff members interpreted this to mean that the decision to implement year-round schools had already been made, without due consultation. This resulted in a wave of anger, resentment and resistance with which partner-district committees had to contend right from the beginning. In some cases these initial reactions were overcome; in other cases they were not. In all cases the work of the committees was made more difficult.

Some respondents would have liked to have had the literature review and annotated bibliography much earlier on, as the committees were beginning their work. Similarly, an earlier date for the BC Forum on YRS (held in April of the first year) would have been appreciated. This would have given the committees a broader framework within which to begin their deliberations and a more "neutral" basis from which to respond to questions and concerns.

With respect to this last point, one partner district in particular felt that, in responding to questions and concerns about YRS, especially from vocal opposition, it was seen as an advocate rather than as a provider of information. It would have helped the position of this committee if some other group or individual had taken on the role of advocate.

Another partner district wished that there had been more Ministry support--especially in terms of incentives--for schools ready to implement YRS. It felt there was not sufficient understanding of, and support for, the risks and costs involved for those attempting to implement YRS.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MINISTRY

The findings of the examination of Phase 1 of the YRS Study Project suggest the following recommendations:

***• that a call for proposals should set out clear criteria for the selection of districts consistent with intent of the project.***

If the purpose of the YRS Study Project was to examine the feasibility of multi-track YRS to relieve overcrowding and better utilize space (as the call for proposals suggests), then the applicants should have been given some guidelines to decide whether or not any of their schools could even support multi-track YRS. This would have helped to prevent the uncertainties and confusion that arose over whether or not the committees should be considering single-track YRS and over whether or not single-track YRS would be funded.

***• that a variety of resources should be available to partner districts before the committees begin their work.***

In the case of the YRS Study Project, these resources might have included a comprehensive literature review and annotated bibliography, a forum, a list of contact people/districts/organizations, etc. The early availability of these resources would have had several benefits. It would have saved considerable duplication of effort as each partner district compiled written material and other resources. Even though the committees would probably have supplemented the resources provided by the Ministry with those of their own choosing, nevertheless they would have been able to begin informed discussion of the issues much earlier. There would have been a broader basis of shared understanding initially, both within each district and at the partner meetings.

***• that the Ministry provide partner districts with guidelines to help them interpret the research literature.***

These guidelines might include a consideration of:

§ the data base--the appropriateness of the data collection methods, including the number and kinds of measures of academic achievement; the appropriateness of the sample size and selection criteria; the availability and comparability of baseline data; the result of disciplined inquiry or impressionistic observations.

§ the sponsorship of the study--who is conducting the study and why; who is funding the study; the selection criteria of the works included in the literature review (i.e., how open or biased the criteria were).

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§ the context of the study sites--what YR calendar is the school/district following; how long has the school/district been following that calendar; what else is happening in the school/district.

§ the report of the findings--the stage in the research project at which the report was written; the use of quotes--who are they from; are they illustrative and representative of the data or idiosyncratic and selective; the need to read media accounts of YRS with caution, even suspicion, especially with isolated quotes or excerpts removed from their context.

§ the interpretation of a finding of "no difference"--in the case of multi-track, year-round schools, which are intended as an efficiency measure, a finding of "no difference" with respect to student achievement, stakeholder perceptions, and behavioral indicators when compared to traditional calendars should be interpreted in a positive light. Efficiencies were accomplished without negative consequences to other important outcomes.

• ***that support and encouragement be given to individual schools wishing to implement YRS, while respecting alternate viewpoints.***

It is distressing to see that the YRS Study Project seemed to have hindered rather than facilitated implementation of YRS on a pilot basis in schools which were ready to try it as the Project began. This came about mainly because, while there was support for piloting YRS within local school communities, this support was not necessarily shared throughout the district. In particular, membership of the district committees sometimes included people other than those who were involved in the early initiatives, people with legitimate questions and concerns. One way to respect and balance such opposing viewpoints might be:

§ for the Ministry to have adopted a stance similar to that of the Utah Department of Education, namely, to permit innovations unless they contravene the law.

§ for district committees to have allowed the implementation of pilot programs by interested schools, with the expectation that these pilots would serve as sources of information for committee deliberations.

• ***that the membership both of cross-district committees and of district committees be carefully considered to reflect all groups equitably.***

Certainly for the most part this was done. However, the participation of a BCTF representative at the partner meetings and some district committee meetings might raise questions of equity. We were given neither a rationale for the inclusion of a representative of this organization nor a rationale the non-involvement of representatives of other provincial organizations such as BCPVPA (British Columbia Principals and Vice-

principals Association) or BCCPAC (British Columbia Council of Parent Advisory Councils) This could be interpreted--even if that were not the intent--as privileging teachers over all other stakeholder groups and of biasing the deliberations in favor of one group over others. This is particularly problematic in that the group represented was already on public record as opposing the concept of YRS.

***• that the Ministry play a more extensive leadership role.***

The importance of the role played by the director of the Field Services Branch of the Ministry of Education--for example, in keep things on track and in facilitating discussion and resource sharing--was recognized and applauded. In fact, there was a need for a local counterpart in each a district.

There was also a need, however, for someone from the Ministry to support the district committees under attack by a vocal opposition, so that they were not forced into the position of appearing to be advocates. Such support was not forthcoming, leaving people within the partner districts to meet the opposition on their own. Not only was this difficult, but it deflected their time and energy from more productive committee activities.

## CONCLUSION

To conclude, there are three points we wish to highlight.

The first is to suggest that, while the above recommendations arose from consideration of Phase 1 of the YRS Study Project, they may have wider applicability. We hope they will be useful in other circumstances. For example, the current Ministry initiative concerning efficiency measures could be enhanced by careful consideration of purpose; by alignment of district selection criteria with purpose (in particular, ensuring that the specific efficiency measure a district is proposing to examine is feasible, given the circumstances of the district); by provision of resources (e.g., a literature review or annotated bibliography; print materials; a list of pertinent professional organizations and contact people; a forum or conference) right at the outset of the project; and by the availability of appropriate incentives, commensurate with the risks and costs to be incurred by the districts willing to implement an efficiency measure on a pilot basis.

The second is to underscore the fact that year-round schools not dead.. They may still happen, albeit not on the original schedule, if given appropriate support and incentives. Some schools, and at least one school

district, have a genuine interest in YRS and would, if supported, pilot a year-round schedule. The current Ministry initiative concerning efficiency measures could encompass and facilitate the implementation of pilot year-round schools.

Finally, we want to acknowledge the support of the representative from the Department of Field Services for the YRS Study Project; and of the extensiveness of the activities undertaken by the partner-district committees, and the care and commitment with which they were conducted. We would also like to acknowledge the cooperation of the Ministry representative and the partner districts in making available to us the information on which this report is based.

**Appendix A**

**Phase 1 of District YRS Study Projects**

***interview questions***

**1. BECOMING INVOLVED IN THE YRS STUDY PROJECT**

(Could we have a copy of the district proposal?)

a) How did your district get involved as one of the seven pilot districts?

b) Why did your district get involved in the YRS Study Project?

c) What was your understanding of the Ministry program?

d) What was the Ministry's role in helping you meet your objectives?

**2. ESTABLISHING A COMMITTEE AND OTHER ACTIVITIES**

a) Once you were chosen, how did you proceed?

b) The Committee

(Could we have a copy of pertinent documentation?)

- When and how did you establish a committee?
- Who defined its roles?
- How were participants chosen?
- Were any outside consultants/personnel involved? If so, who and why?

c) Activities

(Could we have a copy of pertinent documentation? e.g., agendas, minutes, public notices)

- What were the activities of the committee? (e.g., schedule of meetings, purpose of meetings, participants other than committee members)
- Aside from committee meetings, what other activities did you undertake?

d) Funding

(Could we have a copy of your financial report to the district?)

- How did you use the money the Ministry gave you?
- Was it adequate for your purposes? Please explain.

**3. ACQUIRING AND ASSESSING INFORMATION**

a) How have you acquired the information you needed? e.g.,

- What have you read? With whom have you talked?

b) Have you visited any year-round schools or spoken to people working in year-round schools, e.g., at a conference?

c) Who was responsible for gathering information? How was such assignment made?

d) What conclusions did you draw from the information gathered?
How useful was this information? Could you identify any gaps or biases?

e) Did you produce anything (e.g., a report) as a result of this inquiry?
(If so, could we have a copy?)

**4. SHARING INFORMATION**

(Could we have a copy of pertinent documentation? e.g., notices of meetings)

a) Did you hold any public meetings? closed meetings?

- If so, please describe--when? where? for what purpose? who was involved? etc.

b) How did you consult with school personnel? with whom did you consult?

c) Did you consult with any other specific groups? (e.g., parents, trustees, business partners, Ministry people, BCTF)

- If so, please describe--when? where? for what purpose? who was involved? etc.

d) What was the impact of these meetings/discussions?

e) Did you communicate with any groups in other ways concerning the topic of year-round schooling? (e.g., through school newsletters, media interviews, letters to the press, letters to designated individuals, etc.)

- If so, please describe--when? where? for what purpose? etc.

**5. CURRENT STATUS OF YRS STUDY**
(Could we have a copy of pertinent documentation?)

a) What was your original hope in beginning the YRS Study Project?
b) What is the current status of your district investigation into YRS?
c) When/how/to whom have you reported any decisions made regarding the YRS Study Project?
d) What are your plans for the future related to YRS or other approaches to solving the overcrowding problem?

**6. KEY RESOURCES**
Please identify anything or any person(s) particularly helpful during the YRS Study Project.

**7. REFLECTING ON THE YRS STUDY TO DATE**
If you could roll back the clock, what would you do differently?

**8. OTHER PEOPLE TO TALK TO**
Please give us the names of 2 or 3 other people whom you think we should talk to in order to round out this information

**Appendix B**

**Partner District Profiles**

## SCHOOL DISTRICT ONE

### 1. BECOMING INVOLVED IN THE YRS STUDY PROJECT

Even prior to the Ministry announcement, there was interest in this district amongst teachers and administrators to study the pros and cons of YRS. This was motivated by the growth of the district and by a concern that the current calendar does not address the needs of all students, especially those at-risk.

### 2. ESTABLISHING A COMMITTEE AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

There were 21 people on the committee: 7 teachers, 7 parents (from interested schools), 3 senior-level students, 1 trustee, 1 district staff person, and 1 representative each from DPAC (District Parent Advisory Council) and the BCPVPA. In addition, the member for the BCTF volunteered his services and was a regular participant at meetings. The committee met as a whole on several occasions, and tried to keep the Board, stakeholder groups, and school staffs apprised of its deliberations on an ongoing basis. As well, 10 subcommittees each examined a specific aspect of YRS. Information about YRS, subcommittee findings, and the 12 overall recommendations are contained in a report to the Board.

### 3. ACQUIRING AND ASSESSING INFORMATION

The information on which the committee based its deliberations was collected mainly by committee members, particularly through the subcommittees, through visits to both single-track and multi-track schools, and through attendance at NAYRE conferences as well as the BC Forum. The committee also acquired information through personal communications with the BCTF representative, and with Charles Ballinger and others connected with NAYRE. After assessing all the information collected, the committee thought that YRS would be feasible in School District One.

### 4. SHARING INFORMATION

As described earlier, the committee made progress reports to stakeholder groups and school staffs, during which time it also sought feedback and guidance. Other means of communication included the availability of minutes of the meetings, presentations held at schools, press releases and personal interviews with members of the media. The tone of the two public meetings seemed positive, yet the results of the teacher survey were negative (75% against), possibly a teacher response to parent agitation over some aspects of the new graduation requirements.

### 5. CURRENT STATUS OF YRS STUDY

Given the negative response of the teachers, there will be no YRS in the immediate future. But the idea is not dead. The committee's recommendations support continuing the study of YRS, as well as other efficiency measures, and examining districts similar to School District One which have YRS. Contact with a district in Missouri has already been made.

### 6. REFLECTING ON THE YRS STUDY TO DATE

Things got off on the wrong foot when the Ministry announcement was interpreted to mean that the decision had already been made to implement some year-round schools in the partner districts. In particular, it suggested that the secondary school would be going multi-track. This created an atmosphere of distrust which the committee had to struggle with throughout. It might have been helpful to think of YRS as one of many possible solutions to the overcrowding problem.

## SCHOOL DISTRICT TWO

### 1. BECOMING INVOLVED IN THE YRS STUDY PROJECT

As a rapidly growing district experiencing significant problems of overcrowding, this district was interested in exploring solutions. The Board had, in fact, established the terms of reference for a committee to study YRS several months before the Ministry announcement, and saw the Ministry program as a means to support its own initiative. There was some concern that the Ministry was giving too much weight to the fiscal implications and not enough to the educational implications.

### 2. ESTABLISHING A COMMITTEE AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

The committee consisted of 4 representatives of CTA, 3 of students, 3 of DPAC, and 2 each of BCPVPA, CUPE, district staff and the Board of Trustees. Its mandate was (a) to review the concept of YRS and its compatibility with districts beliefs; (b) to review YRS with a focus on educational, personnel and fiscal implications for the district; (c) to ensure a collaborative process with all partner groups; and (d) to submit a final report to the Superintendent by November 1995. The committee met about a dozen times in all, and on three occasions began with an address by an invited speaker: Charles Naylor (BCTF), Shane Simpson (CUPE), and Rod Matheson (a teacher with experience in YRS). There was agreement right from the beginning that no one would "position" himself/herself until the investigation has been completed, and members tried to provide checks and balances for one another in a variety of ways to keep the discussion open.

### 3. ACQUIRING AND ASSESSING INFORMATION

The committee became informed about YRS through inviting speakers to its meetings, by attending the BC Forum on YRS, and through literature on YRS, including both material from districts which have implemented and which have rejected YRS, and the BCTF package. The literature was found to be poorly done and biased. The committee developed a framework of issues, which became the basis of further work, eventually resulting in the development of a series of hypotheses and considerations which were discussed and debated until a high degree of consensus was achieved. This framework was also used to structure the interim report to the Board.

### 4. SHARING INFORMATION

Throughout Phase 1, members of the committee reported back to their stakeholder groups and an item on YRS appeared in every issue of a weekly district newsletter. An open-ended question inviting comment on YRS was included in the "SD43 Future Directions Survey"; about two-thirds of the 2,663 respondents had questions. Two public meetings--one in the morning and one in the evening--were held late in 1995. In spite of wide advertising in a variety of media and of the availability of the interim report in every school, the turnout of about 35 to 50 people was disappointing to the organizers. The amalgamation issue overshadowed interest in YRS.

### 5. CURRENT STATUS OF YRS STUDY

The committee had no expectations when it began, other than to look at YRS openly and honestly within the mandate established by the Board. The final report is expected to be given to the Board in mid-February. At this point YRS does not seem like a viable option. There is greater interest in examining extended days and other efficiency measures, as the Ministry is currently encouraging.

### 6. REFLECTING ON THE YRS STUDY TO DATE

The use of the word "pilot" made it seem as if a decision had already been made, which led to a flurry of opposition right from the start.

## SCHOOL DISTRICT THREE

### 1. BECOMING INVOLVED IN THE YRS STUDY PROJECT

Interest in YRS began in 1992, mainly because of overcrowding. Four people attended a NAYRE conference, then reported to the Board, every school and some businesses on their return (information brochures were distributed at these presentations). Next a survey was conducted, the results of which suggested fairly widespread interest and a need for more information. A number of schools were considering implementation of a YR schedule, and approached the Ministry about the possibility. The Ministry announcement followed this request, and the district applied for a grant as a way of supporting what had already begun.

### 2. ESTABLISHING A COMMITTEE AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

The committee consisted of 2 outside consultants, 3 trustees, 3 district staff, 3 administrative officers, 4 teachers, 3 parents, and 3 CUPE representatives. There was initial discussion about the purpose of the committee, whether it was to facilitate the efforts of the schools which wished to pilot a YR calendar or to examine the feasibility of YRS and make recommendations about whether or not to proceed, and if yes, how. The committee leant towards the latter view, whereas the consultants were under the impression they had been hired to do the former.

### 3. ACQUIRING AND ASSESSING INFORMATION

Much information had already been acquired before the committee had been struck by those interested in YRS, although the committee continued to collect information in ways similar to the other districts. The Terry Fox Junior High School in Calgary was an important source of information for the committee. After the BC Forum, the committee focused much of the debate on the multi-track/single-track issue, and resolved it by developing and critiquing various models of multi-tracking with specific district circumstances in mind. This led to the realization that the district did not have the population to support multi-track YRS, but that they could benefit from a year-round schedule. The committee eventually developed a model for adoption throughout the district. After their examination of YR and traditional calendars, the members of the committee could not understand why anyone continued to use a traditional calendar.

### 4. SHARING INFORMATION

As described earlier, considerable effort had been made to share information and seek feedback during the preliminary work before the Ministry Project. Under the auspices of the Project, the members of the committee regularly reported back to the groups they represented, as well as to schools. Newsletters, and articles and press releases for the local paper were also used to keep the community as a whole informed of committee deliberations. An information campaign had been planned, a brochure had been designed and 20,000 copies ordered before things were put on hold because of amalgamation.

### 5. CURRENT STATUS OF YRS STUDY

The whole YRS issue has been put on hold because of the amalgamation issue. Until that announcement, the committee had intended to share widely information about the model it had selected, encourage discussion of that model, and seek feedback. It had hoped that there would be a decision to move district-wide to a form of YRS.

### 6. REFLECTING ON THE YRS STUDY TO DATE

There were two major reflections: one, that momentum was derailed by the amalgamation issue; and two, that the committee lost ground initially, until it reached agreement on purpose and way of proceeding.

## SCHOOL DISTRICT FOUR

### 1. BECOMING INVOLVED IN THE YRS STUDY PROJECT

The district had been involved for approximately two years. A principal from the district had previously spent a year working in year-round schooling in California; when the Ministry provided funding, he was released half-time in order to head the Project for the district. The original hope was to develop an understanding of whether or not there were educational and fiscal benefits to YRS.

### 2. ESTABLISHING A COMMITTEE AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

A steering committee was established, headed by a school principal, who was released half-time. The committee was composed of members of MRTA, CUPE, BCPVPA, PAC, Trustees, the two interested principals, and the Deputy Superintendent. The committee met four times. It attended an NAYRE meeting and a convention in Toronto. It took part in workshop presentations, provided information through the media (over the previous two years and the pilot period), did a costing analysis, and acquired literature.

### 3. ACQUIRING AND ASSESSING INFORMATION

The district did not make use of outside consultants because it felt it had considerable expertise in the person of its committee chair. Members of the committee attended many Ministry meetings on YRS and did a lot of preparatory work. They did not buy the BCTF literature package, but found that organization and its other materials helpful. In particular, the committee gathered a lot of data in California. As a result of analyzing these data, the committee concluded that parents and teachers generally prefer YRE.

### 4. SHARING INFORMATION

Information meetings were held at approximately 85% of the elementary schools. Information was disseminated regularly over the period. Members of the committee presented workshops in the district and the lower mainland.

### 5. CURRENT STATUS OF YRS STUDY

The committee is waiting for information from the Ministry concerning the funding of operating and implementation costs. It appears, as of February 1996, that the district will go ahead with a single-track pilot at an Elementary School.

### 6. REFLECTING ON THE YRS STUDY TO DATE

It seemed difficult to get good information from the Ministry. There appeared to be little or no appreciation for the risks a district might be taking. There appeared to be little appreciation or recognition that considerable capital cost savings could be achieved. The Ministry also needed to look at the extended day model, particularly for secondary schools. In general, the Ministry should be pleased to see a district wanting to take the initiative and should be trying to help as much as possible. Incentives would be welcome. This district would have liked to see the Ministry move quickly with a couple of pilot projects as people were ready. The perception was that a large corporation would approach this by getting some key staff, freeing them up, developing a position paper (including the costing), and then presenting it. The Ministry did not act in this way.

## SCHOOL DISTRICT FIVE

### 1. BECOMING INVOLVED IN THE YRS STUDY PROJECT

Before the Ministry announced its initiatives, this district had begun to investigate alternative schedules, including YRS, because it saw itself as a rapidly growing district. It had, in fact, established a YRE committee, with representatives of all stakeholder groups--including Parks and Recreation representatives and student representatives--prior to the funding. Apparently a document with some notes with names of schools, thought to have originated at the Ministry level, fell into the hands of some parents who began to see YRS as something that was being rammed down their throats rather than an initiative which had, in fact, come from the district.

### 2. ESTABLISHING A COMMITTEE AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

The committee, composed of 18 members, met and identified its mandate. It then heard of the availability of funding and decided to apply, making a "fairly ambitious plan" for itself which it did not complete. Two principals, who attended the NAYRE conference in San Diego, made a presentation which was videotaped and the tape was made available to the district. The committee held 18 meetings, contacted numerous people, and began to acquire information.

### 3. ACQUIRING AND ASSESSING INFORMATION

The members of the committee collected literature and data, and established a little library. They attended the BC Forum and established contact with Terry Fox Junior High School and other schools--all sent helpful information. They prepared a bibliography, which was included with the information kit developed and made available to any school which wants it. In their report, they identified areas of strength of YRS and listed them, as well as difficulties to be overcome.

### 4. SHARING INFORMATION

Sharing information became difficult because every time there was a public meeting, even to talk about a variety of alternative schedules, the vocal parent group opposed to YRE attended and it became adversarial. The committee, which had set out to investigate issues, found itself trying to refute incorrect information and then were seen as advocates trying to implement something in opposition to parents.

### 5. CURRENT STATUS OF YRS STUDY

A newspaper survey was conducted in the district in November 1995. and it was reported that 35% of the parents were opposed to YRE, 55% were in favor of trying it, and the rest were undecided. That seemed encouraging for the district. The current district position is that the information kit and procedures to be followed if a school wants to implement a pilot are available at the request of any group within a school (parents, teachers, etc).

### 6. REFLECTING ON THE YRS STUDY TO DATE

District opinion suggested that what was really needed was "an outside group that was in favor of year-round education in the same way that an outside group was opposed." The issue does not appear to be closed but is more difficult than was first thought; and the climate of opposition will be difficult to overcome. In the case of an external mandate, it was suggested to us that outside pressure or incentives might lead some people to be really upset, but others would just say, "Let's get down to it."

## SCHOOL DISTRICT SIX

### 1. BECOMING INVOLVED IN THE YRS STUDY PROJECT

The sixth district had been studying YRS and, prior to the announcement of the Ministry's pilot project, had sent a representative to the Oxnard, CA school district in order to investigate the potential for alleviating problems associated with rapid growth in student enrollment. When the program was announced, the district applied for funding to facilitate its investigations.

### 2. ESTABLISHING A COMMITTEE AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

By February 1995 the Superintendent of Schools had established a 14-member committee consisting of members from stakeholder groups. This investigative team met for 10 day-long sessions, read extensively, drafted position papers, attended the BC Forum on YRS, attended the NAYRE conference in San Diego, and received a presentation from a representative of the BCTF. It had also prepared a survey instrument (which is not likely t be used) to gather information at the elementary school level. It had planned to make a video, but bought the San Diego one instead, although it has not been shown much in the district.

### 3. ACQUIRING AND ASSESSING INFORMATION

In addition to the foregoing, representatives from the district attended all of the Ministry meetings, bought the $500 BCTF information package, and made contact with the principal of Terry Fox School in Calgary. The committee drafted 11 hypotheses which it set out to answer, for example, "year-round education will sustain or improve student achievement." It wrote a position paper to be presented to the Board of School Trustees. Its assessment of existing information is that much of it is soft, unreliable and testimonial in nature. A key piece of information for this district is that YRS has the potential to solve problems when the capacity is between 116% and 133%.

### 4. SHARING INFORMATION

In general, rather than using the public media, the district disseminated information by sharing it with principals who could then distribute it through their parent advisory councils and school newsletters. Members of the committee also held some public meetings in schools which had expressed interest; others made a presentation to the DPAC executive and to a DPAC general meeting.

### 5. CURRENT STATUS OF YRS STUDY

A recommendation was made to the Board, which decided not to proceed with year-round schooling. The district may examine alternative efficiency measures.

### 6. REFLECTING ON THE YRS STUDY TO DATE

It would have been helpful to have held the Forum during the first Fall and to have made a comprehensive literature review available much earlier--these would have supported more "substantial, analytical and preparatory thinking." At this point, unless there are serious incentives from the Ministry, it is likely that new buildings or additions to existing structures will proceed, rather than YRS.